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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA,S COMMUNISTS DON,T WANT TO BE IN
GOVERNMENT

¶1. (U) Summary. Jozef Sevc, Chairman of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), spoke at a sparsely attended breakfast meeting organized by the American Chamber of Commerce on May ¶17. Sevc acknowledged that KSS faces an uphill struggle to get the 5% of the vote necessary to be in the next Parliament. Even if the party does make it into Parliament, KSS does not plan or wish to be a member of the governing coalition that will emerge after the election. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Sevc said he was surprised to receive an invitation to speak from the American Chamber of Commerce, but that he accepted because he thought it would be a good opportunity to show he is not a "red devil," and also for him to see that American-style capitalists are not "black devils." (Comment: Unfortunately for Sevc, and to the evident embarrassment of the organizers, he did not get to meet any "American-style capitalist" at the breakfast. Unlike other AmCham breakfasts that have featured more main-stream party leaders and have been well attended, only Poloff, a Pol FSN and the organizers heard Sevc. End comment.)

¶3. (SBU) Sevc spent the better part of his prepared remarks trying to put the past behind him. He acknowledged mistakes had been made by the Communists in the past, though it was unclear if he meant throughout their time in power or only in ¶1989. Sevc said it was not his wish to "return to socialism" but that the role of the state must be increased, the redistribution of wealth must be more just, and privatizations must be put in order. Sevc said KSS respects "ownership relations" but wants to introduce "mixed ownership" as well. (Comment: "Ownership relations" is a KSS byword for "property rights." A "mixed ownership" presumably would be a public-private partnership. End comment.)

¶4. (U) According to Sevc the economy should serve the interests of the social state. KSS agrees with all other parties on the important role of education, and like the front-running Smer party, insists that University education must remain free of charge. KSS would like the health care system to revert to its pre-reform version as they find the reforms of the second Dzurinda government to have been purposeless. KSS remains opposed to Slovakia,s NATO membership and believes the money could have been used for a better purpose.

¶5. (U) KSS feels politically closest to Smer, although Sevc criticized the front-running party for being too close to business. Sevc admitted that Smer,s merger with the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) had probably been an advantage for them, "but every stick has two ends." Sevc said that it is not KSS,s goal to join the next government. Slovakia needs a period of political stability and KSS,s plans are to build support for the long term and future campaigns. KSS hopes to fill a role as a watchdog in parliament.

¶6. (U) Sevc was refreshingly candid about his party,s

limitations and honest about its possibilities. His goal is to find just 180,000 voters. (Comment. A party needs 5% of valid votes cast to make it to Parliament. 180,000 is just shy of 5% of registered voters, but is far more votes than will be required given low expected turnout. In 2002 KSS,s 181,872 votes represented 6.32% of valid votes cast.)

7 (U) When referring to evident obstacles that KSS faces, including an aging voter-base, association with past repressions and no possibility of support from entrepreneurs and city dwellers, Sevc repeatedly said "we do not try to hide this." Sevc said it is hard to run a campaign with no funds and when you have nothing to offer voters for their support except "a warm hand." He said their campaigning is being carried out mostly in person, door-to-door in eastern villages and among friends, family and sportsmen. KSS supports and tries to find voters among small and medium size entrepreneurs. Sevc said they used to count small enterprises as having up to 50 employees but now find firms with up to 500 employees also acceptable.

18. (U) When asked where the money for his programs would come from, Sevc avoided a direct response but did say KSS will not talk about increasing taxes because this would threaten their support and no wise party would do so before elections.
VALLEE